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ABSTRACT

Reluctance to recognize the importance of parents in the education process has been overcome in the past few years. Consequently, states are searching for and implementing programs that involve parents in education. A survey of educators in the Midwest revealed strong support for parent involvement among teachers, principals, and superintendents. An unstable family life and lack of parent involvement were cited often as barriers to education. As the American family changes, it is increasingly difficult for parents to find time to be involved in education. Although parent involvement can take many forms and levels, it should be well planned, comprehensive, and continuous. Parent involvement can result in higher grades and test scores, improved student attitudes, better academic programs, and more effective schools. States can encourage parent involvement in several ways: develop a parent involvement policy, include parent involvement in teacher education, include parent involvement in federally funded programs, and restructure local administration. School choice as it might affect parent involvement is also examined. Schools also can encourage student-parent programs in math, science, and reading at home and at school. Increasing parent involvement takes time, but there are significant potential benefits to education. A list of contacts and Council of State Government publications are included. (JPT)

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EMERGING ISSUES

Back to School: How States Can Encourage Parent Involvement in Education

A Report of the

MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

of the Council of State Governments

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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A Report of the

Midwestern Legislative Conference

Back to School: How States Can Encourage Parent Involvement in Education

Prepared by:
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July 1990

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Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.

-- Education writer Neil Postman

The past decade has been one of monumental efforts to improve the quality of education for our nation's children. Yet, it seemed to take a while before the importance of the role of parents in education received its due attention. During the early 1980s, most articles touching on the topic said that a link between parent involvement and student achievement had yet to be definitively established. Also, there was no general review of the literature.

In the past few years, the evidence has overwhelmingly tilted. Education literature now is full of references to the importance of involving parents, and the states are beginning to search for and implement programs that successfully involve parents.

THE NEED FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION – THE VIEW OF MIDWESTERN EDUCATORS

A survey was conducted in the spring of 1989 to assess Midwestern educators' views concerning education reform in their schools and their states. This survey, conducted by the Roper Organization for the Midwestern Legislative Conference, garnered strong responses concerning educators' views of the necessity of parent involvement.

When these teachers, principals and superintendents were asked to rate some barriers to learning their students might face, "Students' unstable family life" and "lack of parent involvement" received the highest average ratings of any potential problem option.[1] (see table 1)

In a related question, educators were asked to indicate the severity of each of several problems listed, as they apply to the students in their schools. Again, "parental neglect" topped educators' lists: 59 percent indicated this issue as either serious or somewhat of a problem for their students. (see table 2)

Clearly, the time is ripe for Midwestern states to explore avenues of support for parent involvement in education.

TABLE 1 : Midwestern Educators Rating of possible learning barriers as they might apply to their students

Three Top Problems (Average Ratings)	Total	IL	IN	IA	KS	MI	MN	MO	NE	ND	OH	SD	WI
Students' Unstable Family Life (such as abuse, parental discord, etc.)	6.3	6.5	6.7	6.0	6.7	6.4	6.4	6.7	5.8	5.3	6.7	5.8	6.5
Lack of Parental Involvement	5.5	5.9	5.8	5.1	5.5	5.8	5.0	6.0	5.1	4.9	5.7	5.4	5.3
Lack of Funds for Quality Materials or Programs	5.5	6.1	5.5	4.7	4.8	6.3	5.9	5.4	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.5	5.1

** Each potential barrier to learning was rated on a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" meant that it is not at all a learning barrier for the educator's students, and "10" meant that it is a major learning barrier for the students.

** Other options for this question were, "unhealthy learning environment such as drugs, violence, etc.," "too many students in each class," "students poor economic background," "students grouped by ability rather than by traditional grade levels," "students not grouped by ability," "inept teachers, "teacher dissatisfac-

1 "Lack of funds for quality materials or programs" received an equal rating to "lack of parental involvement" but not as high overall as "students' unstable family life".

Table 2 : Four Problems Indicated by a Majority of Midwestern Educators

Percentage of Educators Who Indicated Either "Very Serious Problem" or "Something of a Problem"

	Total	IL	IN	IA	KS	MI	MN	MO	NE	ND	OH	SD	WI
Parental Neglect	59	59	64	56	70	60	58	67	55	45	65	57	53
Alcohol Abuse	57	44	50	59	59	56	61	49	62	54	63	68	57
Latch-key Children	54	60	58	58	55	55	54	51	51	42	54	46	59
"At-risk" students	51	48	64	47	69	46	49	65	43	28	49	52	52

*** Other options included "physical abuse," "chronic truancy," "teenage pregnancy," "sexual abuse," "violence in the school," "dropouts," "homelessness or transient students," and "drugs."

THE PARENT OF THE 1990s AND THE SCOPE OF INVOLVEMENT

Just who is the parent of the 1990s and what does "involvement" imply?

Practically nowhere is the complexity of modern society more accurately reflected than in the make-up of today's family. Diversity of ethnic origin, family needs, and family structure all contribute to the difficulty of finding solutions to increasing parent involvement:

It is difficult for the average parent to find the time or energy to concentrate on school involvement. Today less than 20% of families fit the white picket fence dream of father working 9 to 5 and mother as full time homemaker. In many parts of the country fathers are laid off from factory jobs while wives work to put bread on the table. In some city neighborhoods more than half the mothers raise children alone. Forced by life-long poverty or recent immigration to double up, as many as 12-15 extended family members live in a single room or apartment. Some single parents and recent immigrants work a day job and a night job. Some couples alternate shifts, seldom seeing each other, so that one of them can be home with the children. (Berla, 1989)

Not only does a simple definition of "parent" elude modern society, but so too does the term "involvement in education." Does "involvement" mean encouraging a parent's direct participation in their children's school or homework? Or helping parents to become better, more nurturing parents? Does it mean that parents should teach their children at home?

The research and successful programs seem to imply "all of the above," depending of the needs and situations of the parent, the child and the school.

Anne Henderson is director of the National Committee for Citizens in Education's National Information Center on School Based Improvement for the Community Education Network. In compiling annotated bibliographies of research on parent involvement in education, she said.

The research can be very helpful in guiding us out of this dispute. It is very clear everyone benefits when parents are involved, especially children. It tells us that there is no one best way to go about it. Instead, it says that what works is for parents to be involved in a variety of roles over a period of time. The form of parent involvement does not seem to be as important as that it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive and long-lasting. (Henderson, 1987)

The research indicates overwhelmingly that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children do better. Some of the major benefits of parent involvement that researchers have found include:

- -- Higher grades and test scores, throughout a student's career.
- -- Positive attitudes and behavior, for both students and teachers.
- -- More successful academic programs.
- -- More effective schools. (Berla, 1989)

Researchers such as Reginald Clark have found that the parents' level of education is not the predominant indicator of whether a child will do well, but rather the parents' communication of education being essential. Clark is widely cited as a major influence in shifting the sociological explanation for children's performance

in school away from strict demographic and economic factors. His case studies of poor black families in Chicago, documented in his book *Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail*, show that the family's overall cultural style -- not marital status, educational level, income or social surrounding -- determines whether children are prepared for successful performance at school.

WHAT THE STATES CAN DO

The area of parent involvement is very diverse, and states that want to strengthen parent involvement can do much to help. Some aspects of encouraging involvement can take place on a structural level while others involve the development of specific programs to involve parents in their children's education.

STRUCTURAL ALTERNATIVES

There are many ways states can affect change towards increased parent involvement. Five structural alternatives are described below. According to state needs, officials could adapt one or all five to contribute to a many-tiered effort at encouraging parent involvement.

Developing a State Policy on Parent Involvement

California was the leader in outlining a state policy to support parent involvement. In 1988, the California State Department of Education began a "Parent Involvement Initiative." The initiative noted that parent involvement is a critical dimension of effective schooling, and affirmed, "[t]he inescapable fact [. . .] that consistent high levels of student success is [sic] unlikely in the absence of long-term family support and reinforcement of the school's curricular goals."

In outlining a statewide policy and plan of action, California recognized the need for "comprehensive, continuing programs of parent involvement at all grade levels and across all programs." The state Department of Education defined parent involvement broadly: not only should programs involving parents encourage involvement at the school, but also they should help parents develop parenting skills, support parents as decision makers and develop their leadership.

After outlining a state policy, the Department of Education pledged specific commitments the state would undertake to support school districts and schools, through funding, technical assistance and targeting of programs.

Specifically, the plan of action calls on the Department of Education to support school districts and schools in their efforts by:

1. Publicizing its commitment to parent involvement in the public schools.
2. Identifying promising programs and practices related to parent involvement.
3. Targeting funds for the development of programs, demonstration projects, and evaluations.
4. Providing school districts and schools with technical assistance and support to develop effective parent involvement programs by:
   - -- Disseminating information and research on parent involvement and effective practices.
   - -- Developing in-service education programs on parent involvement for teachers and administrators.
   - -- Working with colleges and universities that train teachers and administrators to develop preservice programs in school and family connections.
5. Incorporating specific criteria for effective parent involvement strategies into the Department's Program Quality Review.
6. Providing ongoing follow-up and evaluation of the effects of the Department's statewide initiative.

Educators' Preservice Training

Part of California's statewide plan of action was to work with schools and universities to develop program components of parent involvement as part of an educator's preservice training.

Educators' preparation programs don't usually include preparation for working with parents. "Here is a topic that affects every child that comes into the school system, and no one is trained to think about it," said Joyce Epstein, principal research scientist, professor of sociology and director of the Effective Middle Schools Program at Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein strongly encourages the states to include requirements for how to work with parents. If educators enter the schools with this preparation, Epstein points out, then staff development inservice can be devoted to how to work with families that represent their particular communities.

Since teaching educators how to develop parent

involvement is not presently part of preservice training, several states have programs on the issue to supplement educators' education. California's leadership program for administrators and future administrators also includes two days of parent involvement workshops.

State Distribution of Federal funds

While the federal government administers and distributes much of the funds allocated by Congress, several programs call for both state and federal administration. Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, for example, is the nation's largest federal education program. State and local education agencies have primary responsibility for conducting this block grant program. State agencies also administer the block grant program of Chapter 2, for basic skills improvement, improvement of support services and special projects.

Henderson suggests that states take Chapter 2 money and put a parent involvement "spin" on every dollar. The state can retain up to 20 percent of these federal funds for improving schools. "They can for example, take 1% of that 20%, and start a competitive grant for parent involvement programs," she said. Chapter 1 funding, which helps kids with reading and math, can also include a parent involvement component.

Not only can the state use its administrative funds from these programs for parent involvement initiatives, but the state can also provide a very strong leadership role by encouraging districts to have a parent involvement component. States and districts can sponsor inservice training and other technical assistance with the percentage they retain for administering Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 programs. Districts can hire parent involvement coordinators with the money going to the schools. "To the extent that the state encourages use of funds for parent involvement, districts can feel confident in developing these components," Henderson said.

Restructuring at the Local Administrative Level

Several districts have restructured school councils to give parents more input into the total school process. The Chicago public school system, infamous for its educational difficulties, decided that parent and community involvement could be the key to improved schools.

Before Mayor Harold Washington's death in 1987, he initiated an education summit -- comprised mainly of parents -- to recommend improvements to Chicago's education system. The summit's proposal was sent to the Illinois legislature, which incorporated aspects of the proposal's restructuring and school-based management ideas into Senate Bill 1840 during the 1988 legislative session.

The first year of the Chicago School Reform Act's implementation -- the 1989/90 school year -- has seen elections for new local school councils, each made up of six parents, two teachers and two community representatives. Parents were elected by parents, teachers by teachers, and representatives of the community by residents in the school's enrollment area. The councils have the authority to hire and dismiss principals (who lost tenure with school reform), approve budgets and determine curriculum. Half of the city's 540 parent-led school councils will pick their principals this year, and the remainder are to choose theirs in 1991.

While some schools have erupted into vehement battles over the dismissal of a principal, the new system has not been in place long enough to show whether these monumental changes will be for the better. "What's at stake here is the essence of school reform," said Dan Solis, executive director of United Neighborhood Organizations, commenting on one council's decision to fire its principal. (Wilkerson, 1990)

Although a few problems in firing or retaining principals have made national news, by the first week of March, 216 councils had voted to retain the incumbent, another 43 had voted to dismiss the incumbent, and 16 schools had either a retired incumbent or one who was being considered along with other candidates, said Bruce Berndt, president of the Chicago Principals Association. More than two-thirds of the local school councils' members who responded to a survey conducted a few months after school council elections in October reported no serious problem in doing their work.

Even with the parent-majority councils, respondents to the survey saw parent involvement as the most urgent need for their schools. Fifty-seven percent of all council members who responded saw an urgent need for more parent involvement, compared with 41 percent for the next most urgent need listed, more supplies.

A new school board will be elected in Chicago as well, and the School Board Nominating Commission is, by law, comprised of "... two parent or community representatives from each of the city's 10 elementary subdistricts, three from the citywide high school subdistrict and five individuals appointed by the mayor of Chicago." (*Catalyst*, 1990)

Charlotte Smarte-Faal, managing editor of *CATALYST: Voice of Chicago School Reform*, said that until

all 15 members to the school board are named, the board's responsibilities will remain ambiguous. Yet it is known that the board will have overriding authority in certain instances, such as suspension of principals.

As Kent Peterson, director of the National Center for Effective Schools, University of Wisconsin at Madison, stated, "In Chicago, reform is a dramatically different effort: it reconfigures relationships within schools, among schools, and between schools and the central office." (Peterson, 1990)

Parents are leading reform in Chicago, even though critics have said that since the majority of the council's members are not educators, they shouldn't be making the decisions. Yet Diana Azcoitia, an interim principal at one of these schools, countered, "The truth is that although most parents are not teachers, they do know if their children are learning." (Azcoitia, 1990)

Choice programs

School choice has been widely debated as a major provision in education reform, and U.S. Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos has supported this method. "The solution is restructuring and the catalyst is choice," he said. Advocates not only stress the potential for students to receive a better learning environment and for schools to improve through competition, but also the probability of parents becoming more actively involved in their child's education through choosing what school their child will attend.

Minnesota, where the "Enrollment Options Program" (or open enrollment, as it is more often referred to) actively began in 1985, is being closely watched by the many states that are considering or have passed legislation to expand school choice. (According to the Education Commission of the States, 20 states fell into this category in 1989. Seven states -- Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio and Washington -- have adopted statewide choice programs.)

Minnesota was the first state to allow parents to choose from any district in the state when deciding where their children will attend school. The 1988 Legislature extended a 1987 choice plan allowing voluntary district participation. Now, districts must accept transferring students except when: 1) there is no room for the student; or 2) the transfer would disrupt the racial balance of the school. Funding follows the student, and transportation will be provided for low-income students.

Critics of open enrollment have made various charges concerning its effectiveness. For example, the American Association of School Administrators has said that, "The secretary's [Cavazos'] approach would do the least for those who have the least." The whole notion of funding following a student has given rise to fears in weaker and poorer districts that they will only grow weaker and poorer.

Others have said that there is no proof of school improvement with choice. Indeed, a Minnesota House research paper on choice in that state found student participation in open enrollment very limited, and stated that most school districts hadn't experienced a significant change in enrollment. Yet this first in a series of working papers on Minnesota's open enrollment program also stated that, "Open enrollment has the potential to become a tool for students and parents to use in influencing district policies and decisions." (Urahn, 1990) Susan Urahn, the author of the preliminary study, said, "A lot of the criticisms tend to run on the district level, with concern that it [open enrollment] may be putting districts out of business." On the student level, she said, concern has been expressed over what will happen to those who remain if a lot of students transfer to other schools. "The criticisms are not based on any of this really happening," Urahn said.

If parents and students can use open enrollment as a tool for improving schools, the opposite may also hold true as far as parent involvement. By sending children to districts other than their own, parents may find it more difficult to become involved in children's school activities and probably won't be able to vote for the school board out of their district.

PROGRAMS STATES CAN ENCOURAGE

Some experts tend to stress one type of parent involvement program over another, and these differences fall loosely into three categories: parent involvement at school, parent involvement at home and home schooling.

Parent Involvement at the School Level

Henderson and other experts believe that parents' involvement needs to take place at school. Henderson stresses that success in school largely determines whether a child feels capable of influencing his or her environment. Parents need to communicate that schooling is important, because if they don't, they are sending a negative message to their child.

Several programs have been developed in recent years that enable parents to develop activities with their children in reading, math and science, regardless of the parents' proficiency in the subject. Other programs help teachers build a parent involvement component into their students' homework.

Family Math and Family Science

Since the mid-70s, a program called EQUALS has focused on helping those traditionally under-represented in math become more interested in the field. It also addresses the issues of access and equity. EQUALS initially developed Family Math at the University of California, Berkeley. Next, an interest developed in providing similar help to parents in science, and Family Science was born at Portland State University. Both Family Math and Family Science work with families of young women and minorities to get parents more involved in the child's education, and teach parents how to help in math and science at home. Both programs follow a series of 4-8 classes of about one and a half hours each, and are usually held in the evening or on Saturdays. Teachers trained in these programs are instructed on how to recruit minority families. The programs emphasize ways parents can get involved that are easily replicated and not expensive, and include discussing career opportunities, said Madeline Moore, the director of Northwestern EQUALS.

"When we do Family Math in a school setting, our objective is to have the children there with the parent. The feedback we're getting is that the time with their child and seeing their child learn is the most valuable thing. I think it because they see how it can affect their children. They get to see their child think, and realize that's good. It's been very powerful across ethnic groups," said Virginia Thompson, director of Family Math.

Results from a questionnaire distributed to parents a few months after Family Math workshops showed that 80 to 90 percent of the parents were talking more to teachers and buying more materials to work with their children. Twenty percent had actually done something for themselves, such as buy a math book.

Family Math has spread rapidly. Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon and Tennessee have either given funding or major state support to the program.

"We offer it, sponsored by the Department of Education, to any educator and/or parent who wants to implement it in their schools," said Mattye Pollard-Cole, math consultant for Colorado's Department of Education. "Full inservice training has been given to over 500 people (since 1987)."

Pollard-Cole said that out of 176 districts, at least 75 districts have had people attend workshops, and at least 40 have offered the program at their schools. Often districts have used Chapter 1 or Title 2[2] monies to send educators for Family Math training. "We've especially had a lot of success in rural areas, which tend to have a lot of Hispanic population," she said.

"We wouldn't be supporting Family Math if it didn't address a lot of issues that we need to address anyway," Pollard-Cole said. "One of our overall goals is to change how math is taught." She said the National Council of Teachers of Math, together with other groups, have come out with several reports on the need for the way math is taught to be reformulated. She considers these reports to be the most important direction for in about 30 years, and says almost everyone agrees that this needs to be done. The reports give very detailed information on what needs to be done in the area of math curriculum in this country and Pollard-Cole says Family Math incorporates these components very well. "It becomes a component through which we can educate parents on how this is being reformulated, [by parents] actively participating in math being taught," she stressed..

Currently Family Science has a three-year grant from Chevron, U.S.A. Inc. to develop activities and field tests around the country. "We're trying to broaden people's notion of what science is," said Madeline Moore. "People are going to have to be comfortable with technology. The more we can demystify, so that we don't view science as men in their lab coats, the better. Family Science tries to get parents to see how they use science in daily process [and then apply these principles to activities with their children]," she said.

Family Reading

"[Family Reading is] a program designed to break into the cycle of underachievement we see so often, particularly in urban areas," said Dr. Ruth Handel, co-originator, with Ellen Goldsmith, of Family Reading. Family Reading provides direct services to the parent generation (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are included also).

Family Reading offers a curriculum of 10 units wherein parents learn to become comfortable with books at their children's levels. They also learn methods for reading interaction that they can take back and experience with their children.

"It uses enjoyable children's literature to teach reading and discussion strategies. In the workshops

2 Federal funds given to upgrade skills of teachers in math and science (Title 2 funds are often called Eisenhower funds).

for parents and other family members, parents become familiar with children's literature, and practice the strategies which they then use at home," Handel said.

Dr. Handel says a variety of things happen as a result of parents' training in Family Reading:

- o youngsters get to hear more stories, and gain reading comprehension strategies
- o children do more reading, an important skill to develop at an early age
- o the parent becomes more aware of the child's needs, as well as becoming a literacy resource in the home.

The program also enlarges parents' concept of reading -- parents who might have thought of reading as a chore now think of discussing what they read with others, and applying what they've read to their own lives.

Whereas Family Math and Family Science stress parent and child participation in all workshops, Family Reading has traditionally stressed the need for parents to be taught by themselves, at least for the first few sessions. The program can be adapted to include parent/child interaction within the workshops, but Handel has found that parents need at least the first few sessions to become comfortable with what they're learning, and to gain confidence.

"It fits very well with the California literature thrust," said Janet Chrispeels, coordinator of the San Diego County Office of Education. She emphasized that San Diego has given Family Reading a strong endorsement by making the training available. She said that Family Reading is " . . . a new initiative, and fairly small at this point . . ." yet San Diego city and county schools are making the training of Family Reading available to their schools.

The county had Handel and Goldsmith come out to train professionals in San Diego who then could train others to teach Family Reading. In April, the county office trained approximately 30 teachers and parents, and in May expect to train another 70. "We try to encourage a parent and a teacher to co-teach," Chrispeels said.

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy has also selected the program model as one of 10 pioneering and promising programs nationally in family literacy. (*First Teachers*, 1989) The Delaware Literacy Initiative has adopted parts of Family Reading into its curriculum objectives. Other school districts, day care centers and community colleges have also used Family Reading.

Not only can states have trainers from each of the above-described programs come to their states to train educators in the process for local schools and districts, but also for helping parents in the workplace. Work in America Institute is promoting Family Math, Family Science and Family Reading as model programs in linking home and school through the workplace. "We've been bringing the programs to the attention of employers and unions around the country, said Robert Zager, vice-president for policy studies at the Institute. "We've also provided some basic training . . . enough to understand the programs." Work in America has also distributed detailed information about the programs in print and through conferences. Maryland's Department of Education has expressed interest in setting up the three programs in workplaces around the state, with the department providing assistance.

TIPS

Another program involves teachers more directly in developing parent involvement in math and science. Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) helps teachers understand ways to involve parents in their children's math, science and social study homework. Developed by Joyce Epstein, the process can be adapted for use with all schools' curricula and learning objectives.

"Every classroom teacher can use this with every student as a homework design," said Epstein. Teachers learn how to design homework assignments that parents and children can work on together. Epstein also says that since the student is the "vehicle," it communicates to the student that the teacher thinks the parent is important in education.

"It helps build the relationship between family and school [and] it is very thoroughly researched program," said Anne Henderson. "Generally our [National Committee for Citizens in Education] emphasis is getting parents more involved directly in the school . . . anything that helps children bond to their teachers and to their schools." Henderson said that Epstein's research indicates that TIPS helps improve teachers attitudes towards parents, and see parents as valuable partners. "The teacher might not have felt that way before . . . but now they do. I think that is absolutely vital," said Henderson.

Epstein has developed TIPS programs in math, science, art and social studies. She sees other programs in parent involvement as complementing TIPS. "If a school used Family Math and TIPS," Epstein commented, "families would have a continued awareness of what their children are doing throughout the school year."

States can greatly strengthen parent involvement by bringing trainers from these programs into their state to teach others how to instruct these programs.

Helping Parents Become Better Involved With Children at Home

Sociologist Beau Weston has found that, in general, when one looks at research on the factors influencing school performance, the difference between schools does not account for much of the difference between students. The student's background is the major performance indicator. When you look at background, parents are the main indicator of progress. So, although it is easier to focus on schools and their possible deficiencies, he believes the emphasis should be on trying to coordinate better the activities of parents with those of the schools. And although he wouldn't say parent involvement in schools is unimportant, the emphasis should be on helping parents to become better parents in general.

States have developed several programs to help parents learn better parenting skills. Two programs in the Midwest, Missouri's Parents as Teachers and Illinois' Ounce of Prevention Fund, provide excellent examples of how states can encourage the strengthening of family relationships.

Missouri's Parents as Teachers

This voluntary program now provides an array of services designed to provide practical information and guidance on language, cognitive, social and motor development in young children. Information is based on Dr. Burton White's widely read guide, *The First Three Years of Life*, which stresses the primary importance of development in a child from birth to three years old.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed a cooperative effort with the Danforth Foundation, four local school districts and the Center for Parent Education. In 1981, a Parents as Teachers pilot project began and ran for four years. The program was independently evaluated, yielding results that have brought the program international attention.

The Missouri Legislature provided funding to take the program statewide as part of the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984. Services are available in all Missouri school districts to all parents of children under age three. During 1988-89, program funding had reached at least 30 percent of the eligible population (more than 50,000 families).

Missouri's Parents as Teachers was selected by the Council of State Governments' Innovations Transfer Program as an innovative state program. An analysis of the program, which includes how states can duplicate Missouri's success, is available through CSG. (Ensign, 1989)

Ounce of Prevention Fund

Public/private partnerships can be developed by the state to fund innovative programs in parenting education. The Ounce of Prevention Fund, established in 1982, is a public/private partnership between the Pittway Corporation Charitable Foundation and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The Fund promotes the well-being of children by working with families and communities.

Although the Fund has developed an array of programs, many of them focus on helping parents develop skills. The role of the state has been key, allocating almost $23 million in state funds over six years. (see Appendix I)

Home Schooling

Following changes in the laws of 30 states since 1982, all states currently allow what could be called the ultimate in parent involvement in education: home schooling.

Two states, Iowa and Michigan, still require that a parent be a certified teacher prior to teaching a child at home. In North Dakota, a parent has to pass a test to be allowed to teach at home. Several other Midwestern states require periodic testing of the student who is taught exclusively at home. (see table 3)

Pat Lines, a research associate in the Office of Research in the U.S. Department of Education, says that between 150,000 and 300,000 children were in home schools as of fall 1988. She calls home schooling a valid option, and says that academic research seems to show that children taught in home schools do better than average, and have not had much trouble getting into colleges.

Chris Klicka, Senior Counsel at the Home School Legal Defense Association said that 85% of those who teach their children at home do so for religious reasons. Most have formed networks with other home-schoolers to develop joint activities.

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Most experts in parent involvement stress the need for a comprehensive policy towards parent involvement. Although states might want to stress one or

more of the options listed above, a more holistic approach could be developed over time. Joyce Epstein says research in parent involvement has shown that the following policies and actions at the state level will improve family-school connections and parent-involvement programs:

1. Write a policy that outlines and discusses the state's commitment to parent involvement.
2. Establish a clearinghouse, library and dissemination office for parent-involvement practices and research.
3. Support state requirements for teaching credentials to include credits for completing at least one comprehensive course in family and school connections and the use of parent involvement in teaching.
4. Support state colleges and universities in the development of comprehensive preservice and inservice and administrator training courses for improving practices of parent involvement.
5. Support master teacher, mentor or lead teacher, or other career ladder programs to build a cadre of specialists in the use of parent involvement.
6. Establish funding and recognition programs, including small grants, for school districts and teacher-administrator-parent teams in individual schools to develop and evaluate comprehensive programs in parent involvement over several years.
7. Support the development of programs for special populations of parents.
8. Recognize and apply the work of community educators in programs to increase parent involvement in their children's education.

Table 3 : Midwestern States' Home Schooling Requirements

Illinois	* Regulated as if private school
Indiana	* Regulated as if private school
Iowa	Home school educator must be certified teacher
Kansas	* Regulated as if private school
Michigan	Home school educator must be certified teacher
Minnesota	Notice of intent Quarterly progress report Child must test in 30th percentile
Missouri	No testing required
Nebraska	* Regulated as if private school
North Dakota	Home school educator must pass test of basic educational skills
Ohio	Child must test in 25th percentile
South Dakota	Notice that "child is otherwise provided for" Child must take annual standardized test Child must have satisfactory academic progress
Wisconsin	No testing required

* Private schools must meet minimal standards of teaching certain subjects and being in session a certain number of days per year.

9. Encourage and recognize businesses that permit their employees to become involved in their children's eduction in order to strengthen the schools, the community, and the citizens and workers of the future.

10. Support research and evaluation on parent-involvement processes and effects in connection with pilot programs and small grants to schools.

CONCLUSION

"[P]arent involvement is the key to strengthening education. This means parents who work with their children at home and who take an active role in their schools improve both their own children's education and the entire school," said Ann Lynch, president of National PTA.

Parent involvement is a process that is going to take time, but potential for strengthening education, family structures and school/family relations establish the state as a key player in the process. As Epstein affirms, "We need to begin somewhere. We need to get the big picture at the state level, so that districts and local schools can work on it."

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CONTACTS

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